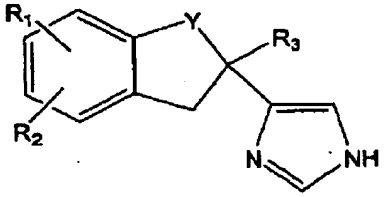
IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1, 8 and 11, as shown below in the detailed listing of all claims which are, or were, in this application:

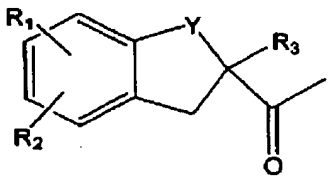
1. (Currently amended) A process for preparing ~~substituted imidazole derivatives~~ compounds of formula (I) and acid addition salts thereof



(I)

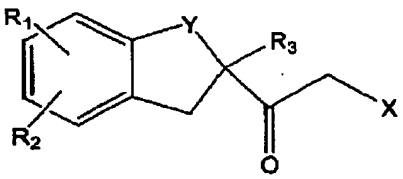
in which ~~formula~~ Y is $-CH_2-$ or $-CO-$, R_1 is H, halogen or hydroxy, R_2 is H or halogen and R_3 is H or lower alkyl, comprising the steps of

a) halogenating a compound of formula (II)



(II)

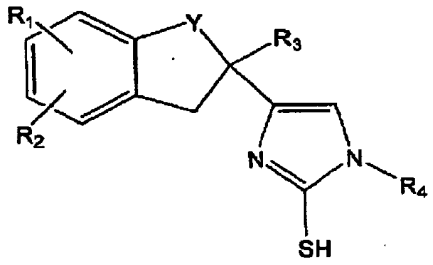
wherein Y, R_1, R_2 and R_3 are as defined above, to obtain a compound of formula (III)



(III)

wherein Y, R_1, R_2 and R_3 are as defined above and X is halogen,

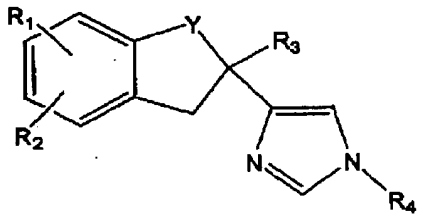
b) reacting the compound of formula (III) thus obtained with an amine of formula R_4NH_2, wherein R_4 is an ~~easily removable leaving~~ aralkyl group, and an alkali metal thiocyanate, to obtain a compound of formula (IV)



(IV)

wherein Y, R_1, R_2, R_3 and R_4 are as defined above,

c) removing the mercapto group from the compound of formula (IV) to obtain a compound of formula (V)



(V)

wherein Y, R_1, R_2, R_3 and R_4 are as defined above,

d) removing the group R_4 from the compound of formula (V) to obtain a compound of formula (I), and, if desired,

e) converting the resulting compound of formula (I) into an acid addition salt thereof.

2. (Original) A process according to claim 1 wherein step a) is carried by reacting a compound of formula (II) with Br_2 in methanol at a temperature of -8 to +25 °C.

3. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein step b) is carried out by reacting a compound of formula (III) with benzylamine and potassium thiocyanate.

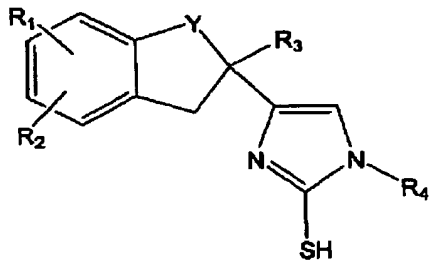
4. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein step c) is carried out in the presence of Raney-Nickel at a temperature of 40 °C to 90 °C.

5. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein step d) is carried out by using ammonium formate in the presence of Pd/C.

6. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein step d) is carried out by hydrogenation in the presence of Pd/C.

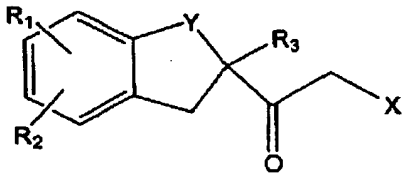
7. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 1 wherein Y is $-CH_2-$, R_1 is F, R_2 is H and R_3 is ethyl.

8. (Currently amended) A process for preparing a compound of formula (IV)



(IV)

wherein Y is $-CH_2-$ or $-CO-$, R_1 is H, halogen or hydroxy, R_2 is H or halogen and R_3 is H or lower alkyl, comprising reacting a compound of formula (III)



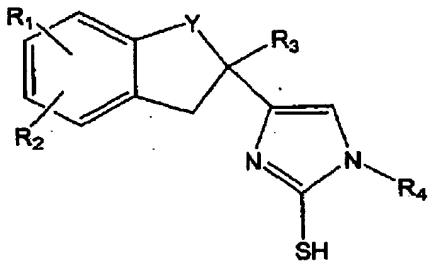
(III)

wherein Y, R_1, R_2 and R_3 are as defined above and X is halogen, with an amine of formula R_4NH_2, wherein R_4 is an ~~easily removable leaving~~ aralkyl group, and an alkali metal thiocyanate.

9. (Original) A process according to claim 8 comprising reacting a compound of formula (III) with benzylamine and potassium thiocyanate.

10. (Previously presented) A process according to claim 8 wherein Y is $-CH_2-$, R_1 is F, R_2 is H and R_3 is ethyl.

11. (Currently amended) A compound of formula (IV)



(IV)

wherein Y is $-CH_2-$ or -CO-, R_1 is halogen or hydroxy, R_2 is H or halogen, R_3 is H or lower alkyl and R_4 is an ~~easily removable leaving~~ aralkyl group.

12. (Original) A compound according to claim 11 wherein Y is $-CH_2-$, R_1 is F, R_2 is H, R_3 is ethyl and R_4 is benzyl.